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Correspondence.

MOBILE, April 25.

FOR two days and nights, exclusive of delays, we have been winding down the Alabama river on a cotton steamer. It is difficult to believe that we have been passing through an old, and many parts a thickly settled country. The banks are too high to look over them upon the cultivated country, and they often rise in bold bluffs a hundred feet high, of limestone, which is much worn and "gouged" out by the action of the water when the river is high, and is surmounted with a heavy growth of mixed forest trees, among which I recognized the water oak, with foliage in color and shape much like the willow, the cotton wood, the poplar, the cypress, draped with the long, grey Spanish moss, and there were many which were new to me. Rhododendrons of several species, and crowded with flowers, find root in the crevices of the rock, and with the blue racemes of the Apios and the Syringa, or snow-drop of startling whiteness, break the monotony of green that mantles the loose earth overlying the stone in places here and there.

The navigation of the river is extremely novel—at one moment the steamer is rubbing one guard against the fallen trees on the bank to prevent the other from grounding on an island or bar of pebbles that occupies the *medias res*, where we cannot say *tutissimus ibis*; next, our course is arrested by shoals and snags, and resumed by the aid of ropes and windlass, and is so tortuous that we get the sun on all sides of us, as if it were intended to roast us like mutton on a spit. At one point the current is arrested by one of the highest bluffs on the river, a solid wall of limestone, from which the water rebounds—the boat keeps steadily towards it, until I could touch the rock from the bows, when we stop, and turn round as if on a pivot, and "shoot" for another cliff on the opposite side.

Nothing, it seemed to me, could exceed the beauty of the upper river when the sun was low, and the little breeze, created by our own headway, cooled the brain down to a meditative point. Wild ducks, in pairs, paddling for a covert, or taking wing down the river, break the glassy smoothness of the stream. The alligator tumbles from the bank, where he has been basking all day in the sun, and sinks from sight; and the heron, with long legs dangling behind, and neck folded upon his back, flaps his heavy wings, and follows the shore to be driven up again soon, while the king-fisher, belated in finding a supper, chatters his vexation as he is driven from the bare bough where he has watched so quietly, and in vain. The buzzards are gathered sociably in a dead tree after their carrion repast, and secure in their own disgustingness, only lift their wings lazily as we pass them. As the twilight deepens, and objects on shore grow indistinct, the night-hawk catches the attention in his irregular flight, plunging and diving at the unfortunate moths and beetles that have ventured too high in their *vespernal* flight; and the wail of the "chuck-wills-widow," like our northern whip-poor-will, chimes sadly with your own musings, and memory takes you on a voyage down another river in the northern land. A wonderful power

indeed, has a familiar bird-note in a strange land.

As we descend the river the scenery changes, the banks are lower, and you can look over them upon the cotton fields, the cabins of the blacks, and the house of the overseer. Little negroes, with skin so black that at a little distance, you cannot tell where the wool and face meet each other, are squatted on the bank watching you, while a larger one is holding a long reed pole, trying to catch some cat-fish. The lime-stone has disappeared, and the alluvial bank, undermined and caving in, with the sand-bar opposite, have taken its place. The cypress is larger, and the reeds more numerous. The cypress is a remarkable tree when full grown; it throws out no branches, except towards its top, and then they run out nearly at right angles, and the trunk, near the ground, spreads out in strong buttresses, so as to give it a strong hold in the swampy ground, where it thrives best. Its foliage is thin and diminutive, but the Spanish moss which hangs from all the branches, in long, grey masses, makes it seem as if made for weeping, and, indeed, fits it for a funeral tree.

The banks of the river finally disappear in the low cane-brake, and untrodden swamp. The river widens, is sluggish, turbid, and deep, and as the spires and shipping of Mobile appear in the distance, the crew—thirty negroes—gather at the bows, and sing a song with a harmony and sweetness of tone such as one unacquainted with the musical talent of the race, will be surprised to hear. And so with song and cheer we enter Mobile.

Yours truly,

J. D. B. S.

TURNER.—Of all the English painters at the period of my first visit to England, I knew least of Turner, having seen very few of his works, and those almost entirely of his later times. In my two last visits, 1850 and 1851, I endeavored to repair this omission, and, having succeeded in examining a number of his pictures and drawings of the most various periods, I feel myself qualified to give my deliberate opinion upon them. It appears to me that Turner was a man of marvellous genius, occupying some such place among the English landscape-painters of our day, as Lord Byron among the modern English poets.

In point of fact, no landscape-painter has yet appeared with such versatility of talent. His historical landscapes exhibit the most exquisite feeling for beauty of lines and effect of lighting: at the same time, he has the power of making them express the most varied moods of Nature—a lofty grandeur, a deep and gloomy melancholy, a sunny cheerfulness and peace, or an uproar of all the elements.

Buildings he also treats with peculiar felicity; while the sea, in its most varied aspects, is equally subservient to his magic brush. His views of certain cities and localities inspire the spectator with poetic feelings, such as no other painter ever excited in the same degree, and which is chiefly attributable to the exceeding picturesqueness of the point of view chosen, and to the beauty of the lighting.

Finally, he treats the most common little subjects, such as a group of trees, a meadow, a shaded stream, with such Art, as to impart to them the most picturesque charm. I should, therefore, not hesitate to recognize Turner as the greatest landscape-painter of all times, but for his deficiency in one indispensable element in every perfect work of Art—namely, a sound technical basis. It is true that the pictures

and drawings of his earlier and middle period overflow with an abundance of versatile and beautiful thoughts, rendered with great truth of Nature; but, at the same time, his historical landscapes never possess the delicacy of gradation and the magical atmosphere of Claude, nor his realistic works the juicy transparency and freshness of a Ruysdael; while many of his best pictures have lost their keeping by subsequent darkening, and with it a great portion of their value. In his later times, however, he may be said to have aimed gradually rather at a mere indication than a representation of his thoughts, which in the last twenty years of his life became so superficial and arbitrary, that it is sometimes difficult to say what he really did intend. Not that I overlook even in these pictures the frequent extraordinary beauty of composition and lighting, which render them what I should rather call beautiful souls of pictures. The raptures, therefore, of many of Turner's countrymen, who prefer these pictures to those of his early period, I am not able to share, but must adhere to the sober conviction that a work of Art, executed in this material world of ours, must, in order to be quite satisfactory, have a complete and natural body, as well as a beautiful soul.—*Dr. Waagen.*

G. POUSSIN.—If, in the finest pictures by Claude, Nature appears in such bright cheerfulness and clearness as to put us in mind of the passage of Homer, where he says of the Islands of the Blessed,—

"Joys, ever young, unmix'd with pain or fear,
Fill the wide circle of the eternal year;
Stern winter smiles on that auspicious clime,
The fields are florid, with unfading prime;
From the bleak pole no winds inclement blow,
Mould the round hail, or flake the fleecy snow;
But, from the breezy deep, the blest inhale
The fragrant murmurs of the western gale."

Odyssey, Book 4.

Poussin, on the other hand, appears to greatest advantage, when he shows the elements in the most violent convulsions—when the tempest sweeps over the land—when the lightnings flash through the dark clouds—and when man and beast anxiously seek refuge from the storm. In such pictures, he produces with his southern scenes the same feeling in the spectator which Goethe so powerfully describes for the northern:

"When in the wood the howling tempest brawls,
The giant pine beneath its fury falls;
O'erthrows the neighboring stems, that sink around,
While with the crash the echoing hills resound."

Even when Poussin represents Nature in a state of repose, yet the clouded sky, with its detached light, and the dark masses of forest, excites a feeling of melancholy, which, however, is always pleasing and soothing, and frequently from the grandeur of the outlines, of the sublimest kind.—*Dr. Waagen.*

MR. HEALY has just completed at Paris a picture, the subject of which is the "Presentation of Franklin at the Court of Louis XVI." *Norton's Literary Gazette* describes it as follows:—

Before the seated monarch, stands, in all the dignity of his noble figure, the representative of America, whose plain citizen's dress, and long flowing locks, are in remarkable contrast with the gay apparel and the powdered wigs of all the persons of the court. Near Franklin, Gen. Lee, of Virginia, and Silas Dean, of Connecticut, who accompanied him to Paris, are represented. At the side of Louis XVI. are the Duke of Richelieu and his son, and several other courtiers. Franklin is in the act of presenting an address to the king, whose hand is extended to receive him. It has been privately exhibited in Paris, and is to be placed in the Palace of the Fine Arts during the continuance of the Great Exhibition.